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ORIGINALITY.

I.

MANY thinkers complain nowadays, that the individuals of which our society is composed lack originality. The complaint is a serious one, for it is lack of personal force and of the energy to create in the people at large, which has brought many a nation to the dust and put many a civilization to shame before the world. Nations, like individuals, must work out their own salvation or cease to be. They must be constituted by men of vigorous and independent mind, or they cannot stand the strain which the law of progress puts upon every living creature. Uniformity is just as benumbing in national life as in religious life.

To a small degree at least, Britain is suffering from this deadening formality at the present moment. The discipline of the political party which has been in the ascendant for the past few years has made the people too acquiescent in its policy, and there has been a consequent loss of vigorous originaive force in its counsels.

This inertia always tends to creep into the national life of highly civilized States. Amid the stress of those strenuous battles which work out the freedom of a nation and give it a high place among its brother nations, men of commanding

mind always arise to fulfil the genius of the people. This demi-urgic task accomplished, so far as national existence and importance and political freedom are concerned, it often happens that great men cease to appear and to devote their vast energies to further national construction. Their efforts tend to create a society too well regulated and too comfortable to be vigorous. It is when these nation-builders—soldiers, statesmen, patriots—who perform what are after all the rougher tasks of the organization of society, have done their work, that spirit-builders ought to begin definitely to rear their subtler superstructures in the minds of men. But it is just at this point that national failure oftenest occurs, and that whole societies go to pieces. It is here that originality ceases to show itself, or that any originality which does show itself is scoffed or neglected or ostracized into silence. The nation, no less than the individual, reaches crises when that struggle ceases which gave it an assured position in the world and which was carried on with naïve directness.

We live in a self-conscious world to-day, a world very largely of display, of fashion and of vulgarity. We live more for appearances than for inner realities, and act in accordance with the opinions of others rather than in harmony with our native thoughts. This untruthfulness is fatal to our originality. It makes us dull and parasitical and even turns some of us into whited sepulchres. Yet many people think that it is a necessary evil because confusion would prevail in social life, if everybody had strong individual opinions, which he represented in action with resolution and persistency. But the general laws of life are such that difference does not produce discord. Indeed, the world is a beautiful framework into which individual men can only fit themselves by maintaining their various characters. It is true that there would be an almost disastrous clashing of ideas and actions did all men possess creative power. On the other hand the possession and utilization of constructive ability by every individual man, is an absolutely necessary condition of social unity.

The notion that in disagreeing with a man on any special ground we create discord between him and ourselves rests on a

misconception of the nature of individuality and originality. People who are too lazy to exercise their own powers, are fond of excusing their dullness by identifying originality with mannerism or peculiarity or eccentricity. In truth originality consists in obedience to the general laws of society and not in the disposition to forsake the beaten track. Yet originality is never dull or tiresome. George Eliot very well expresses its nature when she speaks of "such originality as we all share with the morning and the springtime and other endless renewals." Emerson gives the same truth a very beautiful form. He says: "The sense of spiritual independence is like the lovely varnish of the dew, whereby the old, hard, peaked earth, and its old self-same productions, are made new every morning, and shining with the last touch of the artist's hand." In another passage this profound thinker tells us that every man is by nature a poet.

When we come to consider the grounds of this opinion, we find that originality is nothing but honesty. If all men thought what their nature constrained them to think and spoke only what they thought, the poetry of their natures would declare itself. At first, however, it is difficult to see that perfect social honesty would be consistent with harmony. Our individual natures compel us to differ radically from the majority of our fellow-men, so that we could hardly avoid hurting their feelings if we declared ourselves on all occasions without disguise or prevarication. But the fact remains that we differ, however conciliatory our words may be. Word agreement can never be anything else but artificial. As men become more thoughtful it is therefore to be hoped that the rule of society which brands mere outward agreement with others as polite and forbids the mention of mistakes and faults to their faces, though it countenances gossip behind their backs, will be changed for one which recognizes a more spiritual and lasting kind of social unity.

After all it can only be because we deify our opinions that we are afraid of uttering them honestly to anybody and everybody. When we come to consider the value of our opinions, we learn that they are due to our ancestry, our training and

our individual experiences, which inevitably hem us in and render us incapable of perfectly understanding the opinions of those whose education has been altogether different from our own. Whenever, therefore, we form a really adverse judgment about another man, we manifest ignorance. What we really mean, for instance, when we condemn an atheist, is that we do not think, or have not thought, as he does. and cannot therefore understand the grounds of his conclusions. If we are candid we shall probably acknowledge also, that our own idea of God is so vague, that it cannot have the smallest value for our lives. Instances like that of the atheist make it plain to us that we are finite. This acknowledgment might serve as the basis of a new social rule that would obviate all the disingenuousness which the old one occasions. If any man with whom we are obliged to come in contact be particularly disagreeable to us and if his opinions clash with ours, there is no reason why we should not plainly acknowledge our disagreement, with an apology to the effect that we may not be in a position to understand him, and if possible with a statement of the causes which led up to the formation of our own opinions. Such a confession would be far more friendly than the mere pretence of agreement with others which we sometimes make because we think that the expression of antagonistic views is inconsistent with politeness. As, moreover, this rule would involve an appeal to truth more general than that within which peculiar circumstances have confined our own characteristic ideas, it would tend to destroy class animosity, while so far from creating discord, it would do much towards giving us more humor and sympathy, moderation, tolerance and humility. Of all these virtues it is humility, perhaps, for the growth of which a social rule of honest speaking would provide the best opportunities, for such a rule would make self-depreciation quite as heinous an offence, as open disparagement of others appears to be according to the artificial rule of society. Self-depreciation is hardly ever sincere, and it is, therefore quite incompatible with humility. Society in branding self-praise as ungentlemanly, is only extending favor to those who

are mean-spirited or weak-willed enough to be and to do that which they disapprove.

“Nur die Lumpe sind bescheiden,
Brave freuen sich der That.”

If another rule were adopted which recognized that truth is many-sided, and that the share which individuals have in the great whole is bound to be strictly limited, perhaps men would have a good chance of forming clear and just judgments about themselves. If healthy outspoken egotism be tabooed, men think more about themselves than they ought to do. They hope and scheme for themselves in secret and value the praise and blame of others above their own conscience. Such deviation from the truth upraises many a barrier between man and man. It makes us not only nervous, reserved and self-conscious, thin-skinned, cowardly and parasitical, but even blind, hypocritical and insincere.

Every day we perform all kinds of small disingenuous acts in obedience to customs which it never occurs to us to criticize. For instance, a convention exists among us according to which we must express approval of any presents that are given us. They may give a violent shock to our feelings, yet we must speak of them as if they gave us pleasure. Suppose, for example, an amateur painter presents a friend with a picture which is so badly executed that it is positively excruciating. According to the doctrine of society, it is the duty of the receiver, in this painful case, to say that he is very glad to have the picture, and even to hang it up every time the giver visits his long-suffering friend and take it down again when the visit is over. When we come to examine this case, we find the whole spirit of it so unlovely, that even the blunt, vulgar avowal of the truth seems more friendly to us than the veiled falsehood. But if the rules of society were framed in harmony with the deeper nature of man, no such jarring rudeness would be necessary, and it might be possible for the bad painter to learn that he had atrocious taste—a lesson which would be far more wholesome for him than any flattering thoughts he might entertain about his skill. A mere recognition of the finite nature of our understanding and the complexity of one

another's characters, would make speaking the truth possible on all occasions. If the giver understood that his friend would value the spirit of giving quite apart from the thing given, he would not be chilled at finding that his present was not acceptable. His pleasure would consist in learning to understand his friend better, for that friend would unfold a little piece of his mental history in explaining how his wishes had been misinterpreted, and such explanation would probably involve some amusing disclosures of the incongruity existing between mind and mind and would teach the giver to understand himself so much better, that the effort of self-adjustment in which the discipline of social life consists, would be appreciably easier for him in the future. Moreover, if the giver expected criticism and not mere flat praise as the consequence of his giving, he would not be tempted to give from a desire to patronize others, or to perform a duty, or to be in the fashion, rather than from the genuine hope of giving a worthy expression to friendship. We do not realize how magically so simple a talisman as pure, kind-hearted honesty would act in unlocking our hearts and disclosing the human treasures that lie concealed there. It can only be because we are at heart indifferent to one another that we neglect this source of human knowledge. The fact is, that we have not yet learned to be citizens and we are still only an aggregate of frigid units. The little moral habits which make up the life of a nation are not sound enough to bear any lofty superstructure.

Until our social system and our code of etiquette makes room for originality, we shall never learn to be a true society. Our present system perverts us at an early age. There are few of us who do not remember how we woke up from the heaven of childhood to find that we must speak with regard to the opinion of others, and not with the pure simplicity of truthfulness. Perhaps we admired a sermon which we did not understand, or a picture, the praise of which would, we vaguely thought, reflect some glory on our powers of discernment and gain us credit for having good taste. At first we were ashamed of falsifying ourselves for the sake of other people's opinions,

but society seemed to demand constant self-repression and we became used to our dishonesty. Many people who had little originality to start with, will find on reflection that a process of this kind has been carried on in their minds, and that consequently they do not in reality possess a single opinion which belongs to them, even though they may be extremely dogmatic and may entertain very decided views.

The system of preying upon and robbing the individual until he is destitute of himself is obviously unjust. It is, moreover, most detrimental to society and obstructive to progress, for it props up and maintains men of weak uncertain character, while it battles down those whose native force only just falls short of the genius that frankly abandons itself to a heroic lawlessness. It is harmful alike to the timid and to the aggressive man and it lays a particularly heavy load upon those few proud-natured men, who are endowed with a wealth and depth of fine feeling, but who hide themselves bitterly beneath a harsh and cold manner because they cannot cast their pearls before swine.

A little more tolerance would prevent all such perversion. We ought to be willing both to be ourselves and to let other people be themselves. We ought to go even so far as to countenance, both in our case and that of others, those thoughts and actions which on some grounds appear almost outrageous to us. Emerson goes so far as to say: "I shun father and mother and wife and brother, when my genius calls me. I would write on the lintels of the doorpost WHIM. I hope it is somewhat better than whim at last, but we cannot spend the day in explanation." So vigorous a doctrine of individuality seems at first anti-social, even if we take into consideration the deep pathos of the last sentence, with its brave recognition of what is often the tragedy of individuality. But all men belong to the same cosmic order. If they could all say with Emerson, "Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind," or "No law can be sacred to me but that of my own nature," they would soon be one in spirit. Hans Andersen gives this truth a very fine and simple expression, in the well-known story of the Emperor who walked in proces-

sion through the streets, in what he imagined to be a robe with a sweeping train. He was highly delighted with the fit and with all the splendid ornaments of the costume, though in reality he was wearing nothing of the sort. But the train-bearers solemnly pretended to hold up something in the air, while all the people gazed in admiration and made flattering remarks. Then a little child exclaimed—"But he has no robe on!" and then all the rest of the crowd shouted, "Why he has no robe on!" until the Emperor himself came to know the truth. The spirit of the child had made the crowd one, and it was found that the truth was the same for all. The spirit of truth would make all men brothers. It would not promote *ὑβρις* or anarchy or irreligion or peculiarity. It would make us all lovers of nature and all promoters of progress. Then there would be joy in mere living, and the inevitableness which is the charm of the works of genius would characterize our common acts. The legality of our social life would be the rhythm of music and not the regularity of machinery. Natural laws cannot harden into conventions, because they are new every morning and fresh every evening. We can never weary of doing that which answers the necessities of our nature, which are constantly arising. We need not look to little children and so-called innocent savages and far-off golden ages for refreshment, if we are only true to ourselves. The path of progress lies straight ahead of us. We cannot live on the borrowed past and we need not be sentimental helpless Rousseaus, crying out for a return to nature. We have merely to be honest and we shall be true to the nature which civilization has built up and which will enable us to climb the giddy heights of the future with the steady faith of a child. The task of this age is, therefore, the creation of a distinctly human atmosphere in every place where men live and work.

To perform the task men evidently require more knowledge. As Lowell tells us, men of great original powers are not raised "by some Deucalion and Pyrrha process." The only sound basis of original work is knowledge of the past and the present, well assimilated and adapted to modern needs. No thinker in pleading for a society of independent-minded

men, could ignore the value of study and the dangers of giving unbounded liberty to uneducated men whose mental possessions are of mushroom growth. It is no longer the rough sense-life of the child and the savage which is natural to the civilized man. In the higher stages of men's development the work of Nature is the work of culture.

II.

Obviously much responsibility lies with the universities. The reason why these institutions fulfil their mission so imperfectly is, probably, that they separate science from art. They make education a matter of transplantation and absorption, rather than of conception and production. They do too much pattern work and make far too little of expression. The lecture and the examination system does not call forth originality. The range of expression for which this system allows is too narrow. University methods are adapted to call forth the powers of those who express themselves naturally in lecturing or teaching or writing, but they do not make provision for the very large proportion of the students to whom such expression is unnatural. The few, moreover, for whom they do provide, are just those men who need no provision and whose originality is so distinctive that they would be themselves and work out their destiny in spite of, and not in consequence of, their education, no matter what that education might be. The criticisms on university training put forth by such men as Wordsworth and Gibbon are illustrations of this truth. Perhaps all the university did for these men was to produce an atmosphere in which the higher life can develop. If the universities confined themselves to doing the same work for all students, the ordinary man would have a much better chance of developing on his own lines. The work of the university ought to be the creation of that kind of environment in which the soul can develop most freely. The present system sends quite unpractical men into the world. They may be unworldly, but they cannot make their unworldliness effective. The consequence is, that they often soil their

ideals in the conflict of city life and allow themselves to be subdued to what they work in. Some of them, either because they are nervous, or because they have had little practice in expressing themselves in their own characteristic way, do not seem to have ideas enough, or sympathy enough, to enter with spirit into a common conversation or debate. The university cannot, of course, be expected to give up its high ideals and to vulgarize culture for the sake of the unregenerate Philistines outside its walls. It is, however, bound to bridge over the gulf that separates the vulgar citizen from the man of culture, and if it do not fulfil this duty its higher work is bound to fail, for all spiritual structures must have their roots deep planted in the consciousness of the people. Let the man of visions and ideas soar far away from his age, and he becomes a foolish wanderer.

The universities would fulfil their mission to the people by paying more attention to the education of the senses. What is needed to make our university teaching practical and useful to the people is some such system as that of Froebel, adapted to the conditions of the mature mind and worked out on distinctively British principles. The universities ought to be the promoters of art and even of craft. Since every man is by nature a poet, the aim of the universities ought to be the establishment of conditions of living under which a man can realize in action what he thinks and what he is in potentiality. The student does not get enough will-training. He is taught at college to receive rather than to make. What he receives is truly great and grand; it is a human heritage of which any man might be proud: but if the conditions of the outer world be such that he cannot use this mental wealth, he is not only unable to receive any interest on his capital, but he is necessarily debarred from making any further conquests in the rich world of thought and vision. Every man of genius has felt this limitation which the world imposes upon him. We cannot wonder if the same cold influence chills the ordinary cultured man into acquiescence in the dull ways of the unthinking multitude. Instead of leaving college with the determination and the power to mould circumstances in accordance with his

best thoughts and to stem the dull drift of mere custom, he finds himself strangely homeless in the world. He is a determined and not a determining factor in society, for he has not learned to obey the law of endless progress which is the inexorable law of life. The glorious world of vision becomes a dim unreality to him and "the curtain of the horizon descends," as a modern thinker writes, "round the material things and the pitiful duration of human life." In the case of men who have very sensitive natures, this descent from the world of thought and desire to the outer realities is so steep, that it causes actual madness. Many men of genius have suffered in this way.

All such world-loss could be prevented if men were only taught at the universities to make their own world honestly and fearlessly. The wide-spread popularizing movement which is going on among British artists, and to a less extent among continental artists, to-day, ought to give university teachers a hint as to how they are to awaken the poetry of life in all their students. The British artist of to-day is not so anxious to produce easel pictures, as to beautify common life. The healthy spirit of the craftsman is reviving, even in the midst of philistinism and vulgarity and commercialism, and artists are becoming more and more architects, weavers, book-binders, enamellers, embroiderers, metal-workers, furniture makers, carvers, rather than painters and sculptors. To be sure we still need those works of genius which have no apparent connection with the insistent necessities of the hour, but we also want that sort of artistic work which links the life of the people with that of the dreamer and the thinker, by spreading amongst them the pervasive influence of culture. If they train their students in the spirit in which these workers educate their generation, the universities will be doing much to create the true democracy. The task of the colleges, however, is much wider than is that of the artists. The university should aim at producing artists in the widest sense of the term—artists of life. Its teaching should prompt a man to express every side of his nature freely. The ideal university would teach men to weave words and sounds, form and color

into harmonies with equal ease. In this age of advanced specialism, we cannot realize this ideal, but we ought to keep it in mind, because the exercise of the three greatest of the fine arts together gives the mind the soundest and most comprehensive foundation which could be made for the building up of spiritual knowledge and power, in which the twentieth century ought to progress as much as the nineteenth century progressed in material science. At present the results which only a broad and comprehensive spiritual training can bring about might be produced in some degree by coöperation. Musicians, writers, men of science, business men, thoughtful men indeed of all professions, often call in the artist nowadays, to decorate their houses and to remedy the defects of their own minds. The university would do well to follow their example. The university buildings ought to be beautiful. Every detail of their structure ought to be instinct with the individuality of an artist. Perhaps the newer colleges have a better chance of supplying this kind of education than have the older ones. It is not always that the best kind of culture is what has been described as

"The Past's incalculable hoard,
Mellowed on scutched panes in cloisters old,
Seclusions ivy-hushed and pavements sweet
With immemorial lisp of musing feet."

Great futures are also before those colleges into the buildings of which it is possible to infuse the healthy modern spirit which is stirring among the people. Culture realized in the palpable forms of music and painting and sculpture would give the student an impulse of this spirit, and he would face the world at the conclusion of his college career with the conviction, that learning is after all translatable into the vulgar language, and that the student, whom Emerson calls "the favorite of heaven and earth, the excellency of his country, the happiest of men," is at heart in sympathy with the commonest man in the land. He would be ready to deal in a practical spirit with the problem of the age which is, a modern writer tells us, "the transformation of culture from an intellectual accomplishment into a spiritual grace." Emerson has

stated the problem as it touches the student by saying that the inspired man "should occupy the whole space between God or pure mind and the multitude of uneducated men." It would be better that the universities should be turned into mere technical academies for the teaching of craft, than that the student should neglect this great mission. Perhaps he can maintain his office by acting as a guide to the fine and high arts and can continue to open the way to the remoter steepes of thought and vision, without making craft a part of his curriculum, if he do further work in the popularization of culture through such institutions as Extension lectures and Settlements, which are characteristically British institutions. The age must work out its own destiny. No one can say precisely what form the spirit of a nation or an age ought to assume.

III.

No one who studies everyday life can doubt that it is the duty of the university to set the mind free. Imitation, which is always productive of deformity, seems to be the supreme rule of conduct in all classes. It is not necessity, the proverbial mother of originality, but outward constraint, that determines our actions and habits. The higher classes set the tune and the lower classes dance. The people of the middle classes think they have been educated beyond vulgar pretentiousness. They would scorn the very thought of attempting to live in the style of the wealthy and high-born. But if they consider some of their customs, they will find that many of their daily practices are suited to a rank of life which is much higher than their own. The high and great of the land set the fashion and all those who are inferior in rank assume the position of dependents, though they may not be inferior in good feeling and intellectual ability, the possession of which gifts will alone be regarded as constitutive of good birth, if the establishment of the spiritual aristocracy which has been the dream of philosophers for many a long age, ever be effected on this earth. Imperceptibly, slavish customs have come to dominate men, until they fail altogether to distinguish natural customs from

artificial ones. One of the customs which we owe to imitation, is that of keeping late hours. In most countries throughout history, there seems to have been some subtle connection between artificiality and having dinner in the evening. This institution seems innocent enough, until we come to think about it. Then we find that it originated at the courts of kings and that it has a tendency to become later and later as time goes on. The royal dinner which is now not very far from being a midnight feast, took place in Queen Elizabeth's time before noon. There would have been no objection to the modern dinner, with all the late evening work which it entails for the servants of the rich, if the lower people had been content to go their own way and let the court alone. But they have adapted the time of their own work to the habits of royalty, and lose on the average quite two hours of the most invigorating time of every working day, in order to toil away late at night in glaring gas or blinding electric lights. Yet the nervous inhabitants of our vast modern cities would probably be much healthier and sturdier, if the business world began work at six or seven in the morning and ended at four or five, so that winter lectures and entertainments and summer sports and bicycle rides allowed every man to get his natural share of beauty sleep.

Our houses, again, are all built and furnished on the imitative principles and are therefore ugly. If we were to turn out of our houses everything which is not strictly useful, we should probably reject quite half our goods as mere ornamental rubbish, and if we could look on the world with the eye of the artist, we should be only too glad to make the clearance, for then we should understand the teaching that artists are dining into our deaf ears to-day. We should understand that beauty and necessity are inseparable, and that culture is simplification. Our narrow commercialism and shopkeeper instincts make us look on beauty as occasional and unnecessary, not as structural and pervasive. We cannot separate the idea of beauty from that of display, and this idea has a falsifying influence on our life and manners, which makes us live for appearance rather than for truth and progress. Our commer-

cialism has given us a rage for cheap things and we suppose that decorative things would be extravagant and luxurious. The supposition is false, for if we held to the principle that nothing is beautiful which is not useful, we should spend less money and yet have goods of priceless value. An artist can build a house almost as cheaply as the meanest jerry-builder can run up the hideous tumble-down shanties in which most of us dwell, to the infinite detriment of our thoughts and manners. As long as our houses exhibit sham representations of oaken beams daubed on their exteriors, grained doors, marbled mantel-pieces, curtains and blinds the office of which is to shut out the light and to be cleaned, open fireplaces that cause currents of air to be drawn from beneath the door, and other inconveniences and deformities, we shall be neither a scientific nor an artistic nation.

In our dress we are as parasitic as we are in our house-furnishing. The very fact that we dress with particular care for special occasions shows that we do not appreciate beauty and look upon it as something adventitious, rather than as the framework of daily life. Perhaps the most glaring example of this kind of imitativeness is that of the skirt with which women sweep their houses and even clean the steps of trains and omnibuses, and which originated with a class of women whose business it was to do nothing but look after their houses, dance at balls, and weep over their tapestries for their absent warrior lords.

But the people of the lower classes are not the only imitators in our society. Our English elegance, which is a besetting sin of the aristocracy, is a perfect expression of the French genius, but it has an element of the ludicrous in it when it is assumed by a class of people who are serious at heart, however frivolous they may sometimes be on the surface. If we knew how much of this elegance originated in the not too wholesome court of Charles II., which was so imbued with the French spirit, perhaps the rich and great would be content to be real English people. Lowell has exactly hit off the incongruity of this unnatural polish in the words: "No observer of men can have failed to notice the clumsy respect which the understand-

ing pays to elegance of manners and *savoir-faire*, nor what an awkward sense of inferiority it feels in the presence of an accomplished worldliness. The code of society is stronger with most persons than that of Sinai, and many a man who would not scruple to thrust his fingers in his neighbor's pocket, would forego green peas rather than use his knife as a shovel. The submission with which the greater number surrender their natural likings for the acquired taste of what for the moment is called the World is a highly curious phenomenon, and however destructive of originality, is the main safeguard of society and nurse of civility."

That we seek excitements in order to get away from ourselves in these days of hurry, is another proof that we are not sufficient to ourselves. The eager rush of the age to places of amusement almost justifies the solemn meaning which Dean Trench attaches, in his naïve way, to the word "diversion." Amusements are to the man whose life is not a work of art, what ornaments are to the inartistic house or garment. They are adventitious and cannot give permanent satisfaction. Refreshment should be supplied in the course of daily life, which ought to be a varied and continuous progress. Just as no work of art can properly be called ornamental, so no well rounded life can properly be called exciting. In a perfect work of art the ornament is so intimate a part of the whole, that the effort to analyze the composition is almost painful. The bare outline is itself beautiful and the motive spirit is clothed with such exquisite fittingness, that structure and detail go together in the mind and almost refuse to be separated. The man whose mind is original and self-supporting is like the work of art. His life needs no outward adornments and his mind no diversion, because his work is a perpetual refreshment. The fact that an obscure poet has immortalized himself by singing the never-to-be-forgotten lines beginning,

"My mind to me a kingdom is,"

which are too well known to be repeated, shows that the artist life is the natural life. But we do not exert ourselves to live the natural life and are not willing to let other living

creatures work out their genius. We treat animals, for instance, as if they existed primarily to refresh our inert minds and are not ashamed to modify profoundly even those of their functions which constitute all their beauty in order to amuse ourselves. The charm which a caged bird has for us is its pathetic contentment with unnatural life-conditions and its disposition to act out its own nature with an almost conscientious directness, under difficulties analogous to those social conditions which have perverted our own complex natures in spite of ourselves. We even treat our children sometimes as mere toys and laugh at their pretty natural ways as if there were something ludicrous in them.

Perhaps all these little habits appear to us insignificant. But they are important in that the idle spirit to which they are due enters into the great affairs of the nation, notably religion and politics. Religion, as a great prophet tells us, "must always be a crab fruit." Yet there is no branch of thought in which men have been more sheepish. Religion has been so notoriously a matter of profession and of derived rather than immediate interest, as almost to justify the invectives hurled against it by Shelley, a man from whom we have yet much to learn, even in social doctrines, over which he was so often foolish. Sometimes, indeed, religion is so insincere and hypocritical as to be practically valueless. All along its history it has taught men to approve of themselves and to look upon other men as very wicked—a theory which we carry out in these days of tolerance, by trying to impose upon savage tribes a religion which is quite foreign to their genius.

The same spirit pervades our political life. A recent writer has criticized the political methods which are dictated by this spirit in the words: "A nation wins respect just as it wins a command over the spiritual elements in its own destiny, as it builds its own political foundations and rears its own fabric of government upon plans of spiritual excellence. In the long run we can do more for Africa by civilizing the East End of London than by putting an end for ever to the iniquities of the Kalifa in the Soudan."

The fact is, that until we learn that charity begins at home

in our own minds, we shall never do our parts towards making national and international union possible. We have been dazzled by the splendor of court life and by material achievements, and have, in consequence, woven an artificial link of imitation between class and class. We need to revise our morals much in the same way as Descartes revised our knowledge. Our method need not be nihilistic, but it would certainly establish our independence of mind if it started with doubt of the foundations of all our habits and actions.

It is in the form of a reconstruction of moral ideas that the problem of the age presents itself to the educated classes. It is they who ought to resist the natural tendency of thought to outstrip action, which is so fertile a source of hypocrisy. But the student has more than common temptation to let action lag behind belief, because his thoughts are so far-reaching and so enchanting, that their fulfilment calls for constructive ability almost amounting to creativeness and for energy of more than common intensity. But if they would only be true to their thoughts in action, the educated people could very well do the work for which society is waiting, for their habits are simple and their thoughts fresh, and they know very well that the simple recognition of the naturalness of many processes of our bodies and minds of which we are ashamed, would make people much more childlike, pure-minded and upright. But they have not the courage to reveal their thoughts in action to the vulgar. A very homely instance will serve to illustrate this truth. An educated man or woman can see nothing undignified in bowling a hoop or using a skipping-rope in the street. Indeed it may appear to him a very sensible and time-saving way of getting exercise. Such recreation is no more ridiculous than hockey or tennis or bicycle-riding for pleasure, and it may do a great deal of good to anyone who cannot afford to join a games club or buy a bicycle. It can only be convention which condemns a grown-up man who bowls a hoop as mad or childish, but magnifies a champion who gives up his whole life to cricket or football into a hero. Such rules make us stiff and old, and they are benumbing because we do not really believe in them. A little honest and direct thinking would make

the world young again and would banish from our society those helpless people who talk about golden ages, and who expend servile admiration upon the man of genius who can do as he likes because he is a man of great original powers, while they themselves are only ordinary folks. If we appreciated the ordinary folks more, perhaps we could educate men to abhor the industrial system of the day which makes toilers mere machines. We should cease to be conservative and should do all in our power to get our material work done by electrical power, that our working classes might have more leisure and more varied lives. If all that work for which the application of power is necessary were done by the new methods which we already half understand, we should save so much time as a nation, that the lower classes would again have leisure for craftsmanship and their ample days would flow on towards a broader spiritual future than most of us have dreamed of, for if all men were independent and free, there would be room in society for creative as distinct from constructive originality.

IV.

The chief characteristic of the creator, who is always a leader among men, is his honesty and independence. The reason why men look upon him as either a god or a monster is that he is a little ahead of his age. His calling is the introduction of new truth, the characteristic truth which his generation needs and which is, therefore, absolutely new in form, if not in substance. He is not uncommon. He is simply honest. "The Poet," Emerson teaches us, "is more ourselves than we are," and the same truth is applicable to all artists. The man of genius is the child of his age and no foreigner. "He who would be truly great," Lowell writes,

"Must understand his own age and the next,
And make the present ready to fulfil
Its prophecy, and with the future merge
Gently and peacefully, as wave with wave."

It is his relation to the future, of course, that brings down the scorn of his age upon the man of genius. Perhaps no edu-

cation of society can ever save him from his loneliness. Perhaps

"Disappointment's dry and bitter root,
Envy's harsh berries, and the choking pool
Of the world's scorn, are the right mother-milk
To the tough hearts that pioneer their kind."

But if men would cease to identify genius with eccentricity, they would not make the life of the pioneer one long agony by chilling the atmosphere in which he lives. His work would not be easier if they loved him, but it would be richer and higher and less limited. It is to be hoped, therefore, that in the future the lives of great men will not be soured and darkened by the hypocritical usages of a stupid world. We have sacrificed such men as Beethoven and Swift by our embittering conventions. It is to be hoped that our tolerance will forbid us to stone our prophets in the future.

During the nineteenth century when the pressure of outward things was greater than it has ever been in past ages, Emerson and Carlyle and Ruskin preached with unflagging zeal a doctrine of individuality. They bade us build the human world in which alone the soul of man can breathe and grow. They bade us be makers. In the twentieth century we ought, in obedience to the prophesies of these teachers, to begin to build "The City without a Church," for which some of us are hoping, and which will be also a city without amusements. It will be a city of practical and all pervasive truth and beauty, where men will be

"From custom's evil taint exempt and pure;
Speaking the wisdom once they could not think,
Looking emotions once they feared to feel,
And changed to all which once they dared not be."

It is time that the learned and great began to bring the Promethean fire to men. As soon as they learn that except they become as children, they cannot enter the Kingdom of Truth, they will begin this work. And perhaps the originality which consists in perfect truthfulness actively realized, will be the best of all preparations for the future life. Mr. William Watson pleads for his art with England as the maker of men. All artists might plead their cause with their fatherland on

the same ground. Art is the maker of men, of spiritual men. And perhaps it is a maker in a far-reaching sense that few of us dream of. Perhaps the poetic capacity which lies dormant in each one of us, is the earnest of a world to come where we shall enjoy the ideas of Plato by progressive effort. Perhaps our surroundings in the coming life will be all of our own making and we shall mould circumstances to our desires—a life-process which is foreshadowed, very likely, by the doctrine of the sensuous world as a product of our thoughts which is feigned in the imagination of many a philosopher. But the doctrine for the hour is that life and learning should not be separated and that all men's efforts should be a striving towards the creation of a distinctively human atmosphere which high and low alike can breathe.

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THE SOCIAL VALUE OF TRADE UNIONISM.

IN the United States to-day there are one million and a half of trade unionists and their number is growing with tropical rapidity. All of them are adults and the overwhelming majority of them men. They form an intelligent, disciplined, well-ordered army, strong enough to dictate legislation in both Congress and the industrial States, able to paralyze the whole country should they go on strike together, capable of improving the intelligence and status of manual labor should they be wisely governed. They will form a permanent feature of our social life whether the future industrial development be Individualistic, Corporate or Socialistic. Their influence must be out of proportion to their numbers, for exclusive of the farmers, they include the most skilled and intelligent of the workers, and their increase is favored by that growth of cities which is a characteristic of our epoch. Should they appreciate their possible political power they could create a Labor party which would be the most formidable third party since the Civil War and would possibly supersede the Democratic party. They are